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**Alaska Land. A Canoe Voyage Among the Islands and Icebergs. Sum Dum Bay-Enormous Glaciers-Gold Mines-Products and Future Development of Alaska. (Special Correspondence of the Bulletin.) Sum Dum Bay, Alaska, August 22, 1880.**

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# ALASKA-LAND.

## A Canoe Voyage Among the Islands and Icebergs.

### Sum Dum Bay—Enormous Glaciers—Gold Mines — Products and Future Development of Alaska.

[SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE BULLETIN.]

SUM DUM BAY, Alaska, August 22, 1880.

On the 18th, after giving our Hoona friends a little tobacco and rice for the purpose of keeping up "Klosh-tumtum," (kindly feelings), and taking a long last look at the salmon army in its frantic excelsior march up the rapids, we glided northward along the coast beneath a black, dripping rain-cloud that cut off all the mountains from sight above 200 feet from the water, and allowed only the base of Admiralty Island to be seen on our left, looking intensely blue in the distance across Prince Frederick's Sound. After rowing a few miles we passed a cluster of picturesque islands at the mouth of Shuck's inlet, or "Shough," as the Indians call it. Passing the two imposing headlands that stand guard at the entrance, we proceeded to explore it, though we knew by the purity of the water and the absence of bergs that it contained no great low-descending glaciers, however numerous the smaller ones might be lying in the upper hollows along the mountain walls. We found it to be about nine miles long, and less than a mile in average width. The walls are from 1,200 to 2,000 feet high, rising abruptly out of deep water in beautiful curves clad with a dense growth of feathery spruces to the very top—the narrowest and the greenest of the glacial fiords we had yet seen. On the way up the clouds melted into white sun-filled mist and drifted slowly about the walls in fleecy masses, some of these drawn out into thin, lustrous gauze, through which the trees were plainly seen, producing a most beautiful effect, while many a stream came leaping in glad, strong ecstasy through the green woods, filling the air with music from side to side and from one end of the fiord to the other. Four of these cascades, two on each side, make a grand show of snowy foam as they leap into the dark blue level of the fiord, but the finest of them all is at the extreme head, falling in a magnificent out bounding curve over a granite precipice with a roar distinctly heard at a distance of four or five miles.

#### GOLD MINES.

About half a mile back from the head of this fall, in a filled-up glacier lake basin, are located the Shough gold mines, which, from the date of their discovery some four years ago, have yielded about \$10,000, having been worked in the most primitive way by rockers under great disadvantages. The amount of gold-bearing gravel seems well-nigh inexhaustible; and now that a tunnel has been driven through the rim of the basin to drain it and a good flume built, it is beginning to pay well, though the heavy timber, with its network of interlacing roots covering the deposit, is a great drawback in working it. About a dozen men are employed by the company of three who now own most of the paying claims. These are the first placer mines of any importance that have been discovered and worked in the Territory; those of the Stickine river and the Cassiar district being in British Columbia. New diggings have been discovered this summer a few miles from here that are said to pay from \$10 to \$20 per day to the hand. How extensive this rich deposit may be I could not learn. It is probably quite limited, else large numbers of miners would be already flocking to it.

At the foot of the glacier that shows itself so well as we enter from Stephens' Passage are located the Sum Dum gold mines. The red, metamorphic slates and quartz that have been ground and are being ground in the glacier mill is the source of the gold, while the foaming torrent that issues from the snout of the glacier is used in washing it from the moraine gravel and mud. Even the Indians, not much given to studies of this sort, recognize the action of the ice in this connection. "That glacier up there is digging the gold for those fellows," said one of our crew, as he ceased rowing for a moment and gazed thoughtfully on the grand spectacle. Almost as soon as you enter the bay you hear the roar of the torrent belonging to the gold mine glacier in making its way through the woods, and leaping into the bay in a showy cataract.

#### AN INDIAN VILLAGE—A SUMMER DAY.

Half a mile to the west of the fall there is a small Indian village belonging to the Sum Dum tribe, numbering thirty-seven, all told. They subsist chiefly on salmon and seals, the latter found among the icebergs, mostly well up the two long arms of the bay, near the snouts of the glaciers. They are busily engaged now drying and smoking their winter supply of salmon, which gives their little town quite a lively aspect. This is one of the brightest and warmest of Alaska days, and there is no lack of life to enjoy it. Ducks and gulls in large flocks are flying about or resting on the smooth water. Plovers throng the beach, with here and there a kingfisher and owzel, while eagles, well filled with fish, are taking their ease, riding on icebergs or perched motionless on the tops of dead poles. The principal sounds are the thunder of breaking bergs left in strained positions by the receding tide, the swash and plapping of small waves under the projecting bases of those that are afloat, the scream of the eagle, rattle of the kingfisher, the pleasant voices of the many species of gulls and ducks, and the sustained roar of the cataract. The mines here were discovered last fall by a party of prospectors from Fort Wrangel. Since that time they have built substantial cabins and made a good beginning. Some ten are at work. They told me that the mines were not rich, but that since provisions were readily obtainable at a low price they could make fair wages when the water was not too high, say from \$2 to \$5 a day.

#### THE UBIQUITOUS PROSPECTOR.

This evening I met six of the party of prospectors that went up a branch of the Chilcoot river and over the divide among tributaries of the Yukon. They are now on their way back to Fort Wrangel, prospecting along the coast as they go. They report that though placers were found in several places, none of those were rich enough to pay so remote from any reliable base of supplies. They had no difficulty with Indians; on the contrary, they were extremely well treated by them. The Yukon region through which they passed is mostly plain or gently undulating, covered with grass and patches of small pines. The soil, they said, seemed to them rich enough and the climate warm enough for good crops of wheat and barley.

Some little prospecting has also been done this summer about Cross Sound, and a few claims have been located. The quartz ledges on Baranoff Island are still receiving a good deal of attention, and promise well. The Stewart lode, on which work has been suspended, is still considered valuable property by the owners, the Alaska Gold and Silver Mining Company. The Superintendent tells me that the Company, having already spent a good deal of money on their mine, hesitate as to whether they had better build a large mill and develop the mine or sell it to a New York Company who wish to buy it. This Company, the Superintendent tells me, has offered \$150,000 for the mine. They have purchased the Henrietta claim, on the same lode, and several others, and expect to have a thirty-stamp mill on their property by the 1st of January.

Reviewing Alaska mines in general, I see nothing to change the conclusion arrived at last year, while discussing the subject in the *Bulletin*, that this country will be found moderately rich in the precious metals, but owing to obstacles in the way of their development, all the other resources—fish, furs, timber, etc.—will be brought into the markets of the world long before any considerable quantity of mineral wealth has been uncovered. JOHN MUIR.